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## **2013 Cadillac SRX New touchscreen interface debuts in best-selling crossover.**

### **Overview**

One of the top-selling luxury crossovers in the U.S., the Cadillac SRX boasts unique styling, luxurious cabin appointments, a powerful engine, and a ride that's smooth and able.

The 2013 Cadillac SRX gets a revised interior that incorporates Cadillac's CUE touchscreen interface. An acronym for Cadillac User Experience, the large screen uses proximity sensors, haptic feedback and voice recognition to control phone, audio and navigation functions. Unlike many luxury vehicles with proprietary interfaces (like the BMW iDrive and Mercedes Benz's COMAND system), there is no central control knob on the center console and all functions are performed either through voice or via the touchscreen. CUE has received mixed reviews from experts and consumers. Its natural voice recognition, when it works properly, is a refreshing change from some systems that require the user to memorize specific commands. But a few idiosyncrasies and a glossy screen that shows fingerprints easily makes CUE far from perfect.

New safety packages, already found on the XTS and ATS sedans, also debut on the 2013 SRX. With the Driver Awareness package, the driver's seat will vibrate to warn the driver of an impending collision. More active-safety features are available for 2013, such as automatic collision preparation and automatic low-speed braking, both when going forward and when in reverse.

The front fascia of the 2013 SRX has been mildly refreshed. Otherwise, the SRX carries over essentially unchanged following a significant update for 2012.

SRX is powered by a 3.6-liter V6 that produces 308 horsepower and 265 pound-feet of torque. The 3.6-liter V6, which debuted for 2012, uses many weight saving techniques, such as a plastic intake manifold, lighter connecting rods and exhaust manifolds which are integrated into the heads. To combat the ticking noise characteristic of direct-injection systems, Cadillac engineers packed on added sound-proofing material in strategic places for 2012, which helps to keep the cabin quiet.

Fuel economy for the 2013 Cadillac SRX is an EPA-rated 17/24 mpg City/Highway with front-wheel drive, 16/23 mpg with all-wheel drive models.

All-wheel drive is available for all but the base model. Front-wheel drive is standard.

Inside, the SRX continues to impress with upscale materials and thoughtful design. Smart cargo solutions appeal to practical senses. An optional Pet Guard Cargo Net behind the front seats can help keep your dog in back and may help prevent cargo from flying up front in hard braking. A rear U-well rail system uses adjustable sliding bars to keep gear in place, rather than using nets or boxes that rattle.

Midsized crossovers such as the BMW X3 and Audi Q5 give the more powerful SRX a run for its money, but we'd take the Cadillac any day over the best-selling Lexus RX.

## Model Lineup

The 2013 Cadillac SRX (\$37,330) comes standard with dual-zone automatic climate control, leatherette premium vinyl upholstery, an eight-way power driver seat, a tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel, Bluetooth hands-free phone connectivity, OnStar, the CUE touchscreen interface with 8-inch color display, an eight-speaker Bose audio system with CD player, auxiliary jack and satellite radio capability, automatic headlights, roof rails, and 18-inch wheels.

The SRX Luxury Collection (\$42,705) upgrades to leather upholstery and adds heated front seats, heated steering wheel, an eight-way adjustable passenger seat, power-folding mirrors with auto dimming on the driver's side, auto-dimming rearview mirror, automatic wipers, keyless entry, remote start, a power tailgate with adjustable height, power-adjustable pedals, panoramic sunroof, front and rear parking sensors, cargo management system, interior accent lighting, wood trim and a rearview camera. Front-wheel drive is standard on all models, with all-wheel-drive option on all trim levels except for the base model.

The SRX Performance Collection (\$45,080) upgrades the wheel size to 20 inches and adds adaptive xenon headlights, fog lamps, an adaptive suspension system, navigation system with real-time traffic, and a 10-speaker Bose surround-sound system with digital music storage as well as iPod and USB ports.

The SRX Premium Collection (\$47,920) has ventilated front seats, heated rear seats, three-zone climate control and rear seat audio controls. (All prices are Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Prices, which do not include \$895 destination charge and may change at any time without notice.)

Safety features on all SRX models include OnStar, six airbags (front, side and curtain), antilock disc brakes (ABS), traction control and stability control. Optional safety features include the Driver Awareness package (\$445) with lane departure warning, forward-collision alert and a vibrating safety alert driver seat. The Driver Assist package (\$2,395) includes automatic collision preparation and automatic low-speed braking.

## Walkaround

The styling of the Cadillac SRX is polarizing, with sharp angles and bold lines. It shares its Art and Science design philosophy with the rest of the current Cadillac portfolio, an approach that evokes a love-it-or-hate-it response from critics and consumers. The SRX exterior has been called everything from futuristic to risky to fat. Some have likened its shape to a mal-formed potato. Like it or not, there isn't anything else out there that looks quite like it.

## Interior Features

The cabin of the Cadillac SRX shines. Materials are high-quality and luxurious. The leather-clad seats are cushy yet supportive, and we especially welcomed the ventilated seat feature while driving in the afternoon summer sun. The steering wheel and pedals are adjustable for maximum safety and comfort. Deep door cubbies will fit a variety of gadgets and water bottles. On the down side, drivers who travel with a purse or messenger bag will bemoan the lack of a storage hook.

For 2013, many controls on the center stack have been replaced by Cadillac's CUE, a voice-activated proprietary interface with an iPad-like 8-inch touchscreen. While past Cadillac models were fraught with an overwhelming number of buttons, CUE drastically cuts down the number of controls to just a handful. It controls audio and telephone functions, as well as directions and map information on cars equipped with navigation.

CUE's home menu is configurable so you can access your favorite functions easily. It also uses proximity sensing, which saves extra steps and keeps your attention better focused on the road. When driving, CUE will display full-screen maps or audio information, but when your hand is nearby, it automatically brings up menu options related to the current function on the screen.

Still, we have mixed feelings about CUE. It is supposed to understand natural voice commands, meaning you don't need to use pre-canned terms to get it to do something. But, like all voice-activated systems, sometimes the system doesn't understand what you're saying, which can be frustrating and time consuming.

Another oddity is that CUE uses physical buttons on the center stack, located below the screen, for the climate control's fan speed and temperature. However, if you want to change vent mode, you have to go in to the CUE menu. Another thing that annoyed us was the barrage of fingerprints that appeared on the screen after just a few minutes of use. The ATS does come with a microfiber cleaning cloth, but it's not an elegant solution.

The rear seats are split 66/33 and recline through a fairly wide range of adjustment. Legroom is generous. We liked the opaque covering over the panoramic sunroof (unlike earlier versions which used translucent coverings that always let light in), but it limits rear headroom for taller passengers. With the rear DVD entertainment system, flip-up screens are mounted in front seat backs instead of in the headrest, which make them easier to adjust.

The cargo area offers 29.2 cubic feet of space with the rear seats in place, and more than 61 cubic feet with the seats folded down. A clever U-shaped rail system uses adjustable sliding bars to keep gear in place, rather than using nets or boxes that rattle. When not in use, the cargo bar stows away in under-floor storage area beneath cargo area. The under-floor area can also be used to store an optional spare tire. A Pet Guard Cargo Net is available that can help keep dogs in the back where they belong and may help reduce the chance of stuff flying forward when braking hard, a rare and useful option.

## **Driving Impressions**

The 3.6-liter V6 pulls the weight of the Cadillac SRX around with ease. There is very little noise at all inside the cabin of the SRX, be it from the road or under the hood. Thanks to a plethora of sound-deadening material, noise from the direct injection system is mitigated.

The 6-speed automatic transmission offers several driver-selectable modes: Eco, Sport, Manual, and Normal. In Normal mode, the SRX offers ample power. In Sport mode, the transmission holds gears longer than it would in Normal model for improved acceleration performance and to reduce upshifting when slowing momentarily for a corner. The system senses braking, throttle input and lateral acceleration (turns). There is also a manual mode for those who enjoy rowing through gears. In this mode, shifts are barely perceptible, although there is more delay when changing gears by hand, since the electronic sport mode anticipates gears for faster changes. The 6-speed automatic transmission includes a driver-selectable Eco feature that alters shift points for greater fuel economy. With the Eco mode switched on, the SRX shifts at lower revs, which Cadillac said will save about 1 mpg at speeds of 50 mph or slower. We pressed it and noticed it lost some oomph, but we weren't rendered powerless.

The Cadillac SRX handles remarkably well, despite being quite a bit heavier than most of its rivals. Depending on equipment, the SRX weighs more than 4,400 pounds. Its responsive steering is a refreshing change from the numb feel of the Lexus RX. We found the available Sport Suspension was able to manage the SRX's considerable weight with relative grace, and we noticed little body roll (lean) in corners. Combined with the 20-inch wheels, which have short sidewalls, the SRX was smoother than expected over bumps.

But the SRX isn't sporty in all respects. The brakes feel like they're better suited to gradually cruise to a stop and lack the bite of the sportier CTS.

### **Summary**

The 2013 Cadillac SRX is one of the best vehicles in its class thanks to its able engine, luxuriously appointed interior and engaging driving dynamics.

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